

**Interview with Anna Marie Collat
conducted by Linda Byrne for the
Providence District History Project Providence Perspective
October 7, 2010**

Linda: I'm Linda Byrne and I'm sitting in the home of Anna Marie Collat and we want to talk a little bit about the area in which you live here. What do they call this area?

Anna: It's called Idylwood.

Linda: Idylwood and you're not too far you're a stone's throw from route 7.

Anna: Yes, we are actually in a triangle between Route 7, I 66 and the beltway.

Linda: Anna Marie the unusual thing I find is that you have how much land here? You have?

Anna: We have just under two acres.

Linda: And you have horses.

Anna: Yes, when we bought this property, we bought it, we, it was said it was only one acre okay. But there were horses next door. And since we had been looking for a place where there were horses; where I could keep a horse we thought well this is not too far from Washington. Justin had his new job in Washington and so we bought this place.

And then I became friends with the neighbors who had the horses and they let me ride their horse and we rode cross country with them on the railroad right of way.

Linda: Oh, the Washington and Old Dominion Railroad (W & OD).

Anna: The W & OD at that time the trains were still running.

Linda: Oh they were?

Anna: Yep

Linda: What years would that have been?

Anna: 1966. Then in 1968 Dee Evan Smith moved away and we would have liked to have bought the two adjacent lots but he would only sell us one. Okay, now these lots were always called an acre; it turns out they were only a .09 acre. So nobody cared, the rule in Fairfax County was you have to have two acres in order to keep horses. Well they had had horses but they had three, almost three acres and the address is well the street over there on Virginia Lane. But of course we are fence to fence.

We had these horses for 30 years and always with the idea we had two acres but then it turned out we didn't have two acres. But nobody cared; everybody was happy including the neighbor across the street who said she loved horses etc.

Well then in the very late 1990's, 1998, 1999 or 1998 the people sold their land to a developer but of course we were not interested in doing that and at that time I had rented the next pasture. The pictures show that. And so the woman who owned that then told me in a very unfriendly way that I had to get out of there. And take all the electric fences down. She was very nasty about it.

Linda: um hum.

Anna: And I had just finished making hay and put hay in the little barn there's a little red barn was there. Alright fine I had to be out by November first or something. So I scrambled to make room for the hay up in our garage here. And then we took down the electric fences, so fine. I also took down some of the big boards and big sheets of plywood that I had put in the stalls down there because I had one horse still down there. And so we took we took those off we had put them in there; we felt we had the right to take them out. And then nothing happened for a while. But then they put pressure on us to sell our land too to be part of this development. And of course we didn't want to do that. And I started to become active because what I learned about the development was that they

wanted to put 28 houses in this area. And that just seemed to be much too dense.

So I went to the Planning Commission; I wrote a letters, I organized the neighbors and just said if you want to develop that's fine but you've got to make it a little less dense, this is too much. So there was a big back and forth and then this neighbor went to the County and complained about the horses. She had found out we don't have two acres and she thought as long as I rented the extra acre I was okay but of course that has nothing to do with it you have to own two acres. So someday I had an inspector here because there was a complaint. Okay – inspector – inspected everything and he said well it's great how you keep the place but the rule is you have to have two acres and you have only 1.8, two 1.9 lots. Okay so I say what can I do? He said you can apply for a special permit which we did. So again I trotted around to all the neighbors – this is the case will you support me? And there was a lot of stuff going on and I went to the office and talked to Gerry Connolly and he was very nice and supported me too. And then we had a hearing – I think it was the planning commission. And wouldn't you know nine of my neighbors came on a work day it was a Monday morning or a Tuesday; nine of them came to testify for me.

Linda: Oh, how wonderful.

Anna: Wasn't that nice?

Linda: Yes.

Anna: Yes.

Linda: Now Gerry Connolly was your Supervisor at the time.

Anna: He was our, yeah Linda succeeded him when he became Chairman of Fairfax County Board of Supervisors. Linda succeeded him. (That is Linda Q. Smyth)

Linda: So you operated your riding facility here from the 1960's up until in the 1990's with no complaints until this neighbor ah

Anna: Yeah, well the riding kind of stopped, when did that stop, I gave the riding lessons for about 20 years and then I stopped doing it. And so the riding lessons were not really part of this. You know it was never a business it was always a hobby. But no she just wanted to – she wrote a nasty letter to the county complaining about the odor and she said that I could take the horses to Warrenton and stuff like that.

Linda: Oh, dear.

Anna: And well.

Linda: Let's go back to your early life. Where you were born and where you grew up.

Anna: I was born in Danzig which is called Gdansk in part of Poland but at that time it was Danzig and had been Danzig for hundreds and hundreds of years. But we had a small Polish minority living there so after the Second World War that was given to Poland, seceded to Poland.

Actually when I was born Danzig was a free state and had its' own government that ended in 1939 when Hitler started the war in Poland and annexed Danzig. So we were then part of north Germany. In the early years from 1930, I was born in 1930 and we had a lovely childhood there in a suburb just outside of the city; not a suburb like here this was just a few streets. But between our neighborhood and the city there was lots of green space which use to be defensive areas. You know there were some artificial hills and some were natural hills. So it was a great place for going sledding and skiing and there was a pond where we could skate and it was great. We could put our skates on in the house and clunk down the steps with our skates on. My grandmother who lived downstairs in our house, my father had made an apartment for her there; she would come out being very disagreeing with it completely as we would come down the stairs in the house with our skates on. And then we could skate right down to the pond and on the

snowy streets we could do that and clamber down the hillside and get to the water, frozen water. Yes, so that was a great place to grown up.

In the summers we would go to the sea, seashore; there were many lovely beaches not too far away. Some you could go on the streetcar and then others you would go on a ship on water until you got to the other side of this spit of land called the Hoff. So it was a wonderful childhood and this all ended of course in 39 Hitler invaded Poland and did it starting right in Danzig. That was only a seven day war so it was over very quickly and for us life became almost normal afterwards.

Of course then England got into the War and then finally the United States so and then Russia so Germany was had two fronts it was very bad. But as I said the early years of the War we were not prepared and then in 1943 I think it was no, yes, yes, we got some children from west Germany after they were called bomber kinder children. They lived in areas like Colon and we had a little boy from Arhunt and they were heavily bombed so they took the children out and took them east to where things were calm. So they wouldn't be exposed to all this so we had this child with us I think for two summers.

But then the Russian front came closer to us and things got not much better in the east anymore. So they took those children back home. In the meantime we also had people who came from Homburg from those terrible bomb attacks. To some people who survived them they put them on trains and would bring them east and we had some people from that living with us for a while.

So the war came and presented itself more than it had before. And then finally in 1945 – oh then in 1944 the – yeah in 1944 the children in Danzig were supposed to be taken to safer places than the cities. So first we were all organizing with the Nazi Party did most of the organizing and so they took us all into a camp and

actually in a very lovely place but it was right on the sea. On the spit of land called Hela; well that wasn't very good I didn't like it at all. So my parents found a private place for us in the countryside and this was the town where my father had been a teacher when he first had finished and he had all of his degrees and he began teaching there. So his old landlady agreed to take my sister and me; to shelter us there. Well my sister wasn't very happy, she was still little. She was only nine years old or so. And so I stayed there by myself and then I wasn't too terribly happy there either but the minister of the church offered to take me in. They had a very nice house, Mainz, very close to the school. Everything you could do on foot there. And so I lived with them for almost a year. I went to school there.

Linda: So it's really hard leave your family, live in a different place than your family.

Anna: Yes, yes and you know all of a sudden you are – yes it was not easy at all. But I make friends easily and so I liked the people and they liked me it seems. I went to school there the only problem was in that school they had started Latin in the fifth grade and I was in a school where they started English in the fifth grade. So here I was I didn't know any Latin but there was one lady in the house she must have been a former teacher she made a regular business of tutoring children. So you could go there and got help with your Latin and everything. So they taught me the basics of Latin so I could just more or less stumble along.

And then of course at the end of 1944 when I went home for Christmas I had the feeling that I'm not coming back here. So I remember I packed everything I had into my suitcase. And I had to take the train and when I was changing trains in one place the handle of the suitcase which was way too heavy broke and I managed somehow. And I got back home so but by then the schools were closed in Danzig it was pretty bad.

I remember that winter the water was turned – we had no water so my mother and our maid would go to the snow covered hills and get snow and we'd melt that to have water just think of it.

Linda: Whoa.

Anna: So it was pretty tough and then most many, many people fled. I mean they got on a train and just go, go to West Germany somewhere to get safe because the Russians are coming. And they were doing horrible things in the East where they were it was just - . We had long columns of refugees, people who had fled the countryside from the east, East Prussia where there were big land owners, farmers. They had put everything they had on wagons and hitched the horses on it and left.

The land route was already closed off by the troops so they went over the frozen hoff(?) which was a kind of an inland sea. And wouldn't you know the Russians went with their airplanes and bombed the ice and they all drowned.

Linda: Gasps

Anna: Oh, yeah this was awful, so many of them drowned.

Linda: Oh, how horrible.

Anna: Many, many of them drowned many – some got across before this happened and didn't get caught. Then others got caught that way. And then they would come through Danzig after they had these horses that had pulled these wagons hundreds and hundreds of miles. And then they were dead all lined up there I remember they lined up one wagon after the other and the horses all standing there like.

Linda: Oh.

Anna: This was awful. And then we had another bad thing happen. My father was so upset about this whole business that he, he was a diabetic so he was not

drafted. He was a studenard(?) which is a teacher in a high school, you know kind of like a professor; you have to have advanced degrees and all that. So he volunteered to go and dig tank traps. You know he couldn't stand it anymore he wanted to die I think. So he didn't have the right diet there, he didn't have insulin so he came back after a few weeks and he came to the door and I didn't recognize him. I went screaming upstairs and that was my father very sick. He went straight to the hospital from there. And he was still in the hospital when Danzig was attacked and the hospital was evacuated so he was put on a hospital train together with all the other people in the hospital and the train left. We didn't know where they were going and he kept imploring my mother to stay in the house and don't flee. You don't know where you will end up etc. You know you couldn't do that because these Russian troops they were brutal. They were horrible they raped every female they could find eighty year olds or eight year olds. And so my mother wasn't going to stay there with two little girls. My sister was 9 then and I was 14. So and then you know she would sometimes she said she met one of my father's colleagues and these wives all knew each other. And he said "what you are still here you have got to get out". And so she inquired and found out that there was a ship still leaving from Danzig the next day. So and this ship left from the shilhil(?), the shipyard which is the same place where Lech Walesa brought later.

Linda: Oh.

Ann: Yep. So we trooped up there with the little suitcase we could carry, anything, only what you could carry which wasn't much you know for two children and a woman. And of course I had to leave my dog behind and had to leave my little bird behind. Now our maid was from the country she took the dog. My grandmother and my aunt who lived in that aforementioned apartment downstairs, my grandmother didn't want to go. So we left on the ship it was a freighter.

Linda: Did your grandmother go with you?

Anna: No, no she, they stayed behind. And we were on this ship and it took us five days on the sea on the Baltic to get to the west. We had in previous years gone on pleasure trips on the zedenizauspusser(?) it was called very nice little cruiser ships overnight you got to West Germany. So it wasn't all that far but these ships had to do evasive routes. And I remember when we were on the ship all of a sudden there was announced everybody under deck because we were under attack under the threat of attack so they didn't want people on deck. We were not attacked but other ships full of refugees were sunk actually by the Russians. So we got to West Germany and then here we were we were not refugees here we were quartered with some farmers out in the country which was fine for me cause I loved the horses and everything. Actually my mother and sister lived at one farm house and I lived half a mile down in another house which was very strange. And those people they were ordered by the government to take in these refugees. So they didn't like it of course and some more or less nasty. The people I went to were really very nice to me. And thinking about it later it was really touching cause their older daughter their older child, was a young woman then and she had a job in the town of Vestisadid(?) five miles away and she worked for a bank. But she shared her bed with me, not just her room but her bed. Now here was I had never slept in a bed with anybody and I was on the edge. How nice of her to do this.

Linda: Wow.

Anna: You know when you think about it.

Linda: Yes.

Anna: Here was a total stranger and so yeah that was there.

Linda: Now how did you get to the United States?

Anna: Well that was much later that was in 1958, I had in the meantime moved away from the farm to this little town and I went to school there and finished school. And then went to college and what I wanted to be was a veterinarian.

But I had no money. We were refugees and nothing no money nothing. But the one thing I could do was go to the teacher college because that was – they needed teachers so badly you didn't have to pay tuition. So okay fine, I would go on that little train and so trundle up to Autonberg(?) to go to the college there. And then finally I found a room where I could stay. And then it was actually only a two year a course but it was quite rigorous you know. And then you had to teach for at least five years in the Province where you were because you had to somehow pay back for being given this education.

Linda: Yeah.

Anna: So I did not stay in Autonberg(?) but I did stay in Hanover(?) which was a little 50 or 60 miles south. And in a little town there called Tigenholf(?). That was my first teaching assignment. And there it was really nice, I started with the first grade and they were not big classes then fourteen little first graders but we had a good time.

And then you had a choice as a teacher if you wanted to you could stay with the group so the next year then I had the same children as second graders.

Linda: Oh, that's very nice.

Anna: Yes, which was very nice, I thought it was very nice now the education people said well it isn't good there should be a change because there could be personality clashes which would disadvantage some children. We didn't seem to have that problem they seemed to be doing just fine. And the parents were very happy; and I stayed with them a third year. But then in the meantime I really wanted to go and do a bit more and advance myself so I want to go to Bramam(?) and that was out of Wedershaus(?). And I had only taught three years and I wanted to leave. But finally I did get some sponsorships and I could go to Bramam(?) because I was going to teach in a special school for the mentally retarded the word is no longer right but anyway children with special needs.

Linda: ah huh.

Anna: And these were mostly intellectual needs not so much handicaps. We had some Down Syndrome; I had one Down Syndrome little child in class then.

Linda: And how many would be in your classes then; how many students would you have?

Anna: There I still had 27. This was a fourth grade but in their academic progress was only around second grade.

Linda: Um Hum.

Anna: So there was a lot of different type of teaching. I took a lot of classes in the meantime myself and also worked my second examination. That's something every teacher they call them, Youngclara young teacher every Youngclara has to go to these courses and they have people come and observe you in class etc. So that all went on at the same time and then I did a lot of studying about special needs children and how to teach them etc.

Well I stayed with them and also I kept them for two and a half years. Actually I mean all together it ended up as three years but then I got this idea I wanted to go to the United States. My sister had been an exchange student when she was still in high school. She was five years younger than I. And then she had spent a year in this country and then came back. And I thought gee I would like to do that too. And so I inquired about a Fulbright Scholarship something like that but it was such a tedious process. I would apply and then maybe and maybe not and so I tried to do it a little more easily. Again I had very nice friends who wrote to their friends in this country and said couldn't they sponsor this young teacher. Because that's what you needed a sponsor had to be accepted at a university. Well okay so we got a letter back yes we will be glad to sponsor her and that was at Ohio State University. So I applied and they accepted me and so then I went, off I went to this country and landed.

Linda: And how old were you then?

Anna: Then I was twenty eight. That was in 1958; and so I went to Columbus Ohio. I came to this country in April and I first went to the people who had been hosts for my sister to that little town in Pennsylvania because school didn't start until the summer. The summer semester didn't start until June so I was there for a little while and that was nice. I needed money because I had to borrow some money to pay for my trip. Also the American immigration people, you know you go on a student visa but I had to prove that I had enough money that I wouldn't become or go on the pocket of the American tax payers. So I tried to make money wherever I could so I worked in a turkey plant plucking turkeys that came up. You know after the war I would go into the fields and help with the harvest we were kind of required to do that so we went and picked potatoes and did everything else that needed to be done. They came and picked us up right at school in their wagons so.

Linda: Now how did you meet your husband?

Anna: Well that was at Ohio State when I was, as I said I was went to Ohio State and started going to school in June in the summer semester and we tried to work out what kind of curriculum I should have. Because I wanted to get – they wouldn't admit me to graduate school in spite of the fact that I had equivalent of a Master's degree in German. But no I didn't have the American credits. They were very nice people. They were very nice professors which were counselors with whom I worked out a program. So I got credit, a lot of k credit they called it. There were still some classes I had to absolutely take – American History which I hadn't had any American history; and I aced that one so English I was fine I passed the language test. So then I went into an education plan and got – I took classes there whichever were required. And I did very well and again there was this money problem so I lived in a dorm during the summer and I went to the summer course first. Then the dean of foreign students said well why don't you come and live with me I have a spare bedroom and all you have to do is clean the apartment for me, you don't have to pay any rent. Great, so that saved some money. And then I also did some tutoring of kids which suited me just fine. So that's the way I got through there and then within a year I got the bachelor's degree.

Linda: Wonderful.

Anna: A lot of hard work and perseverance but and then they said well why don't you go to graduate school. So I had my contract in Germany and a position in Germany I was supposed to go back to I was just on leave; so I wrote to them and they said sorry but we cannot keep this open for you so you will have to resign; which I did because I had been admitted to graduate school and I didn't want to miss graduate school.

Linda: What did you study in graduate school?

Anna: I was still pretty much in education but I did not get a Master's of Education I got a Master's of Science in Education. But now they have this Masters of Education but this was a Master's of Science in Education. So I worked the thesis and everything and I got the whole thing done in one year.

Linda: Oh my goodness.

Anna: And so in 1960 I got the Master's Degree and on the same day I married Professor Collat. And that came about again because again no money needed something. I did get the scholarship from Ohio State; I did not have to pay tuition. But I had to live so I worked in the Faculty Club as a waitress and that's how I met him.

Linda: What did he teach?

Anna: Chemistry.

Linda: Ah.

Anna: He was a Professor of Chemistry.

Linda: So how did you two end up here in Providence District in Fairfax County?

Anna: Well he got an offer from the American Chemical Society to come and work for them downtown at the headquarters.

Linda: This was in Washington D.C.?

Anna: This was in Washington D.C., so he accepted that. Then we went looking for a place to live and I really wanted to be somewhere where there were horses nearby; so we went all around the county, the neighborhoods, and the real estate. People took us around what was available for was, you know, shabby little houses and way out in the country and not – and also had to be within our price range so. And then the agent said one day you know something has just come on the market and you might be interested in looking at that. It was this house and it only had the one acre; but there were horses next door.

Linda: This house is how old?

Anna: This was built in 1902.

Linda: This is a wonderful house.

Anna: So that's what we did. And the house had just come on the market and we snapped it up.

Linda: Um hum.

Anna: So in August we moved in here in sixty six.

Linda: Then you added the other lot?

Anna: And then – well what happened – the people on the other side who had the horses, that was Colonel Evan Smith. He had a little barn and everything was just so perfect I couldn't believe it and he let me ride his horse too on cross country rides and everything. And then they moved to Nokesville; they wanted to have a bigger place out in the country because he was then retired; he was a Colonel and he didn't make General so he wanted to retire then.

Linda: Yes.

Anna: And they went out there. And so we wanted to buy his land. I would have liked to get the little barn and everything but he would only sell us one acre. It was right next to us, so he said we want to keep the other two acres (just a little minus two) so that people can have horses there. Well that was the idea but the people who bought the place it turned out to be a kind of speculators and they

rented it out. And they rented it to some other strange characters who turned out to be – they cleared out the barn and made it into what's called a chop shop.

Linda: Oh.

Anna: They would steal cars.

Linda: Oh my goodness.

Anna: Usually they specialized in Cadillac's up in New York or somewhere up north. They would drive the cars down here kind of take them apart and then resell them. We didn't know any of that; we only knew that they would drive motorcycles in the pasture, the lower pasture we called it. They made a lot of noise with those things. Finally we had had something happen there was a shootout in the police garage and they arrested these people. And it turned out that's what they had been doing.

Linda: Oh my.

Anna: And I think for a while there was a school bus parked behind it – the little farm. Some of my old pictures actually shows that school bus. And they had, I think they had stolen the school bus; they were just criminals. So they were very bad. And finally they got the guy I think in front of the Holiday Inn or somewhere there was a showdown and I forget the details but it was quite something.

So then other people moved in and people with horses moved in; and they had many, many horses. And they would come and go so apparently these people bought up horses and then sold them again. And of course you know they had horses so I talked to them and they were kind of strange. They had the house was turned into a menagerie; they had all sorts of animals in there, it smelled pretty bad. These horses didn't get enough to eat apparently because they would break down the fence and break into my side and then they would also go break out on the other side so it caused some problems and some people complained about them and put pressure on them that they had to get rid of the horses or move or something. Then they got rid of the horses but before they did I had my eye on one of their horses and that is that Morgan horse. He appeared there one day in

the pasture very thin just skin and bones; but he had this wonderful way of going and thought God what a nice horse. So I finally ended up buying him for three hundred fifty dollars. So that's how I got Penny and he was impossible; I mean you couldn't ride him. He had been mistreated. I saw one of their, they couldn't ride very well anyway, but this girl tried to ride him and it was just a disaster he would just not tolerate anything.

Linda: Now the riding that you did in Germany tell me about that, the training that you had there.

Anna: Well I always loved horses. My mother says that as a little tiny baby in a baby carriage I would just if there was a horse in the street I would stretch my little head around just to see this horse. I Crazy about horses ever since I was born but there was really no way I could have a horse. My uncle who was in the military and he had a horse and he once came into our backyard and that was just wonderful a big horse oh yeah. But my parents wanted me to have riding lessons but I had to be a little bit older and it just didn't work out. In Germany there are a lot of riding academies in cities and everywhere but it just never worked out for me to have riding lessons. So when I was a teacher in that first little town I went to the riding academy in Ferdin(?) just a little town south of Hanover. And so there I went to the riding academy. I had already had some riding lessons when we lived in that little town in Westfahlia(?). That was another thing I have to tell you about. They had riding lessons every Sunday; and the people who rode were usually the sons mostly sons or daughters of farmers in the neighborhood and they would ride their horses in there and then have a lesson. Well I didn't have a horse so I would stand on the fence and watch this. So then one day I talked to the teacher and inquired would there be any way that I could borrow her horse or something and take part in these lessons. So he actually, we found a horse that I could ride and that was, how did that work oh yeah it was, the uncle of a classmate who had come from east Prussia with a couple of horses in a track, you know as I told you the wagons with the horses. Now they made it all the way from East Prussia to Oldenburg which is West Germany which is just a little west and south of Brin(?). And one of these horses lived on a farm out of town maybe five or so miles. And he had seen me there because I would sit there and the

riding teacher would let me ride well you know there was one of the boys who was riding who had had a broken leg or something so he couldn't last through the whole lesson; his leg would hurt too much. So then I could get on this big old horse and start riding. And that of course in a riding lesson you usually start out at walk trot and then the later part of the lesson is canter. That's when I got on so I kind of had to learn the hard way, I fell off a few times but at least but I learned a lot just from watching.

Linda: Yes.

Anna: And so I tried to do the best I could and then this uncle who was a horseman and interested horseman would be on the fence watching and he offered me that I could ride his horse without a saddle. He didn't have a saddle either. So the riding teacher had a saddle and he was willing to loan me his saddle but he had the saddle at his house. And so on the Sunday morning I would go to his house and pick up the saddle and then put the saddle – I carried it on my head because it was you know a saddle is pretty big. And I would walk the five miles to the farm where the horse was.

Linda: Oh, my goodness.

Anna: And then the challenge was to catch the horse because he was wily as a fox. He had the color of a fox and he wouldn't want to come. I would have apples, carrots whatever for him and he would take them willingly but then he would just stand there and not budge. So I had to figure out a way so I said okay fox we will just walk the other way. So I walked him away from the gate and once we were in motion then I could get him to the gate.

Linda: Laughing.

Anna: I'd get him out and get him to the barn, groom him and tack him up and then he'd say what you want to ride me – no way. So I had to maneuver him to a fence and he was clever because he knew if he stood sideways to the fence I could get on so he would turn several ways. So I usually climbed over his withers carefully and then slid back into the saddle. So eventually I got on him and I

would ride him back to town the five miles and have the lesson and then play the whole thing in reverse.

Linda: Oh.

Anna: Ride him back take him to the barn. And after a little while he knew me and he was nicer and I didn't have to make such a big circle to get him out of the pasture. Anyway I did learn to ride there.

Linda: Good.

Anna: That was the beginning.

Linda: Now fast forward a few years to when you are living here in this house and then you have a family.

Anna: Yeah, I started the family in Columbus all three of them were born in Columbus.

Linda: Oh.

Anna: There I had some horse experience too but I drove out to a place to rent a horse and I don't remember if I had lessons there or not. Well I did ride there.

Linda: You have two daughters and a son.

Anna: Yes.

Linda: And both your daughters are riders or did ride.

Anna: Yes, both. My son was not so much interested in riding but he is a very technical person. So when we were with the Pony Club – there was a time when I started the cross country and he would be there and arrange for my loud speaker and he was very much interested in all these technical things.

Linda: And you mentioned to me earlier that you had been involved with Pony Club which is the children learning to ride here.

Anna: I taught them to ride yes.

Linda: You taught them and then they joined the Pony Club.

Anna: Yes, I taught them and then they joined the Pony Club. And they were already they were good riders.

Linda: Um hum.

Anna: Especially the older one, the younger one only came along. For Pony Club you have to be at least 10 at that time; and my younger one wasn't that age yet.

Linda: You also mentioned that you would trailer your horses out to Frying Pan Park which is actually in the Hunter Mill District and a wonderful facility for riding and it's just now in 2010 that the Fairfax County Park Authority is beginning to offer riding lessons through the Park Authority. There is a group called Fairfax4Horses that has been working with the Park Authority to help establish this and we hope that it will grow and blossom.

Anna: Good yeah right, right.

Linda: But when you were trailering your horses out there they had the indoor riding facility?

Anna: No, no at first they didn't. No, no that came later when we were no longer with Pony Club. And then they built the indoor; it was very exciting that they were going to do that. No when we went there it was just a - we had a couple of riding rings for dressage and jumping and then we had a cross country course which and they have a very nice three phase event every year.

Linda: Tell me for our audience what a three phase event is.

Anna: Oh yes, that involves dressage.

Linda: Which is?

Anna: Which is a type of riding that emphasizes the obedience of the horse. So the horse is put through its' paces and as you have to demonstrate when you are in a competition you have to show that your horse is obeying your aides, aides are the signals that the rider gives to the horse to do what the rider wants him to do.

And so in dressage you teach the horse to obey your signals and at the same time remain relaxed so he can move at his greatest capacity which he cannot do when he is not relaxed. So that is dressage and you do all the things in more advanced dressage you do very fancy things. But basic dressage you want the horse to be obedient, go when you ask him to trot when you ask him to and obey your aides to turn, go into the canter so all these things are emphasized in dressage.

And then the second phase in the combined training is jumping and that's stadium jumping where you have to ride a course of obstacles and they are set again you, test the horse to jump, to turn, to go to the next and to do all this in the prescribed time.

And the last phase is the cross country which is depending on the level you are riding in between one and two miles of riding through various terrains with obstacles set up built into the terrain. And again it's a question of time; making it in a prescribed time except in the very low classes where the time doesn't count. The objective is to clear the obstacles without having your horse baulk and refuse to go over. I like that.

Linda: Yes, yes.

Anna: So.

Linda: Now tell me living here in Providence District what are the biggest changes you have seen in the area both good and bad?

Anna: Well of course the biggest change is the huge influx and development. When we look out the window here we see houses. For 30 years we looked out the window and we saw trees. Because this was an area of 9 acres of land that didn't have houses on it; there was the little house across the street; the other houses were all on the fringe of the 9 acres. It was very lovely; it was very rural and very nice. And another nice thing was the right of way for I66 had already been cleared, however nothing happened no road was built; which was a wonderful place to ride. And so we would tack up right here and go down Center Street which was just a dirt lane at the time.

Linda: Tack up meaning saddle your horse?

Anna: Tack up means yes, saddle and bridle your horse. And then we could get on right there and ride down Center Street and get into the right of way. And go all the way up to Route 7 on the one side and on the other side we could go out as far as we wanted to. There was also, we were also riding it was on the W&OD railroad right of way. At first even before I had horses I road there with a neighbor and you could ride alongside the trail. There was a wide space because there was a power line and you would ride under there. And then when the train stopped running then you had the right of way to ride in and when they developed the trail – I was actually on the trail commission, committee rather not commission giving my input that this should be included that equestrian place you know across the street at least be allowed.

Linda: Well and that happened.

Anna: That happened in some places you know but not down here. We were allowed on the trail but there was no facility. In other places further west there is actually a wide equestrian path – trail where you can ride. So we just rode anyway; we rode right next to the pavement. And we went all the way to Hunter Mill on it. We went through Vienna. Through Vienna that was always kind of challenging because you had to cross Route 123.

Linda: If you were going to say to someone moving to Fairfax County now – do you have any advice for them?

Anna: Well I do have some really have some complaints about the way Fairfax County is managed. And one is that the needs of the people are not really always considered, it's more the needs of people in cars. For instance take a sidewalk. Somebody builds a subdivision and puts in a sidewalk and it ends and you are supposed to step into the road; well this is to me coming from Germany where you build sidewalks and streets and it's a community thing. They come first and then the houses come. Now here the houses come first and then maybe there'll be a sidewalk until this property ends and then where do you go? This is one

thing that I very much but this is probably true in most of America. It's just the way that things are done over here which is too bad.

Otherwise Schools I think are very good what we have experienced with schools I thought the schools are good. I did a little bit of work in the schools. I taught German as a second language, just a course in Fairfax County for a few years. Then I think it was discontinued because of it was always a problem with money as always. You know it cost extra money so these extra programs are then discontinued which was too bad. I don't know if they are doing it now or not. And of course now we no longer have children in the public school, in the schools, because they are all grown up. They all went to college and they all have their jobs.

Linda: Well, I want to thank you very much for this interview this has been a real pleasure.

Anna: Thank you very much.